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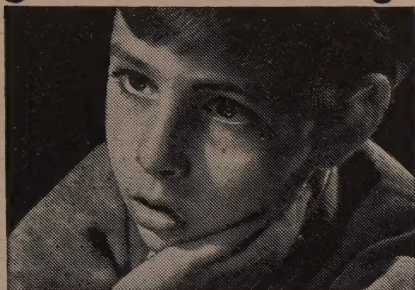
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Edited by Frances Stephens

May 1947

Over the Footlights

WE are beginning to see, in the West End, the result of the valuable work which is being done by London's outer circle little theatres and try-out theatres. *No Room at the Inn*, *Pick-Up Girl* and *Power Without Glory* are representative examples. Now that it has become obvious to all that courageous groups of, for the most part, young people, at theatres like the New Lindsey and the Boltons, are producing outstanding new plays, handed to discerning West End managements as it were on a plate, it seems something more than folly when some managements elect to produce out-of-date importations like *The Animal Kingdom*. This, it was not surprising, London theatre-goers would not support for more than a few performances.

As we go to press the West End has seen within the course of a week two superlative musicals, *Bless The Bride*, at the Adelphi, and *Oklahoma*, at Drury Lane, both of which will be reviewed next month. One is in the best English tradition and the other all-American, according to the latest technique. London appears to have taken both to her heart.

Birthmark, the play recently at the Embassy, which was reviewed last month, followed the ill-chosen *Animal Kingdom* at the Playhouse on 22nd April. *The King of Rome* was produced at the Boltons on the same date, and a new play by James Aldridge, *The 49th State*, at the New Lindsey, on 29th April. On the latter day *Less Than Kind*, a play translated from the French, was produced at the Arts.

Leslie Henson had a big welcome back in the revival of 1066 *And All That* which opened at the Saville on 24th April.

Other new productions produced too late

for review include *The Red Mill*, which began its run at the Palace on 1st May, and Ivor Novello's new play, *We Proudly Present*, which followed *The Anonymous Lover* at the Duke of York's. That ever-green thriller, *The Shop at Sly Corner*, has finished its run at the St. Martin's, where it was succeeded on 6th May by *My Friend Lester*, which is reviewed in this issue.

Worm's Eye View, one of the most amusing comedies London has seen for many years, returned to the Whitehall on 5th May.

Donald Wolfit's season continues at the Savoy, where, in addition to Volpone, Shylock, Hamlet and Lear, Mr. Wolfit has given his admirers an opportunity of seeing him as Iago, opposite Frederick Valk's Othello.

All good wishes for a sunny season will go to the ever-courageous Robert Atkins when the fifteenth consecutive season at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, opens on 22nd May with *Twelfth Night*. *Lady Precious Stream* will follow and the season is expected to last at least twelve weeks.

After an interval of some weeks *The Three Cornered Hat* and *La Boutique Fantasque*, with Leonide Massine, have returned to the ballet repertoire at Covent Garden, together with *Symphonic Variations*, which has not been presented for some time. Following the great success of *Rosenhavalier*, it is announced that *Turandot* will be the next opera. Incidentally, the Opera House has recently issued a luxuriously produced souvenir of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company's work at Covent Garden. Many of the illustrations are in colour. The price is 10/-.

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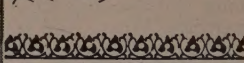
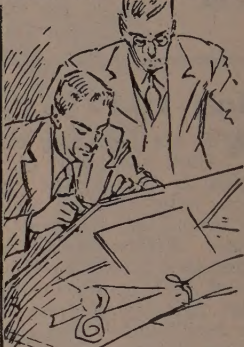
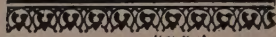
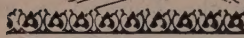
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P676A

New Shows of the Month



"Power Without Glory"

Flo: You do know who murdered her.

A dramatic moment from Act II of Michael Hutton's new and cleverly written play which recently transferred from the New Lindsey to the Fortune Theatre. In the picture *L. to R.*: Cliff (Dirk Bogarde); Anna (Maureen Pook); Mother (Beatrice Varley); Father (Trevor Watson); and Flo (Mary Horn). (Picture by Swarbrick Studios).

"Lady Inger of Ostraat"

GREATLY daring, the Actors' Theatre Company essayed Ibsen's early work, *Lady Inger of Ostraat*. The attempt was commendable and not without interest. An attractive setting was designed by Philip Whichelo. *Lady Inger* is a notable example of the mother who, ignorant of his identity, encompasses the death of her long-lost son. Ibsen was early in this field. As the haughty yet conspiratorial chatelaine, Molly Veness led the company and gave an outstanding performance. Generally, however, the difficulties of mood and intricacies of the plot were beyond the range of the actors. A bad habit of singing the lines made the playing of Eline's part a source of irritation.

H. G. M.

seen and one that proves the part can be played effectively without splitting the ears.

The Iago of Anthony Quayle is no operatic villain. He appears such "a good sort" and so honest at heart that none of his colleagues could be persuaded of his evil genius. Mr. Quayle's conception stresses the common soldier whose rough accent is prejudicial to his promotion. In consequence his completely convincing performance makes the villainy deeper than ever. In their scenes together Mr. Hawkins and Mr.

"Othello"

THERE is nothing superfluous about this production of *Othello*. The scenery is simple, the costumes colourful and the pace speedy, all suggesting that this play is the most theatrically exciting in the Shakespearean repertoire. Peter Powell's sweeping conception of the play touches the heights of high tragedy in the final scene. Jack Hawkins makes Othello an honest, trusting soul whose pathos is rather more effective than his passion. It is an Othello to be

"*Lady Inger of Ostraat*"—Gateway, 26th Mar.

"*Othello*"—Piccadilly, 26th Mar.

"*Candida*"—Piccadilly, 27th Mar.

"*Waifs that Stray*"—New Lindsey, 1st Apr.

"*Neighbours*"—Boltons, 1st Apr.

"*Larry the Lamb*"—Granville, 7th Apr.

"*Volpone*"—Savoy, 9th Apr.

"*Call Home the Heart*"—St. James's, 10th Apr.

"*Noose*"—Saville, 13th Apr. (Services' Sunday Society).

"*The Play's The Thing*"—Lyric, Hammer-smith, 15th Apr.

"*My Friend Lester*"—Embassy, 15th Apr.

"*Present Laughter*"—Haymarket, 16th Apr.

"*Together Again*"—Victoria Palace, 17th Apr.

"*Rosenkavalier*"—Covent Garden, 22nd Apr.

"*Richard II*"—New, 23rd Apr.

Quayle create a suspense as exciting as the warning rumblings of a volcano on the eve of eruption.

Fay Compton's Emilia shows how a past mistress of histrionic art can make a minor role a memorable experience without attempting to enlarge it beyond its prescribed dimensions. Every syllable rings through the house with the right degree of expression demanded by its context. Elizabeth Kentish brings youth and pathos to Desdemona. This eager company of gifted players deserve to remain at the Piccadilly for many months to come. E.J.

"Candida"

THIS remains one of the most satisfying of Shaw's plays, and doubly so at the Piccadilly, where the company, headed by Fay Compton and Jack Hawkins, extract every ounce of meaning and humour from the tale of clever woman triumphant.

There is a nicely studied contrast between crazy poet and complacent parson: Geoffrey Keen tackles the part of young Marchbanks with all the stops out, which is as it should be. Jack Hawkins as Mavor-Morell is a physically solid windbag, painfully reminiscent of some reverends we have met: this actor has the Shavian technique at his finger-tips. Fay Compton's Candida was in some respects a little disappointing,

despite her delightful appearance and beautifully spoken words. Was there perhaps too much practicality and too little persuasiveness? This is a difficult part: it needs a superhuman to deal convincingly at one and the same time with Marchbanks, a figment of Shaw's imagination at its most perverse, and Morell, whom one might meet any day in the Church Assembly.

Morland Graham's Mr. Burgess added Cockney colour to the proceedings. Joan MacArthur's Prossie was competent, and Raymond Westwell played the Curate with conviction. A word is due to Maisie Meiklejohn's delightful costumes and setting: the latter surely too solid to have accompanied the recent European tour. F.S.

"Waifs That Stray"

IAN SWIFT's new play, *Waifs That Stray*, is not very amusing, despite stripping performances by Ivor Barnard and Tatiana Lieven. The story mainly concerns Dr. Joseph in the house of Dr. Potiphar and the clever, modern behaviour of Madame Potiphar. Austin Trevor raises hope on his first appearance as pompous Dr. Potiphar, but the hope is soon discounted and never redeemed. H.G.M.

"Neighbours"

THE production of *Neighbours* by Anthony Merryn is an outstanding theatrical event. For years to come this play will give a deep satisfaction. The author takes away the fourth wall from the unfashionable, comfortable villa of Mr. and Mrs. Surrey, touches everything up so that we see it at its best (for this is Art, not a commonplace photograph; an affair of the human spirit, not mere factual testimony), and shows a group of friendly, well-meaning people, all doing their best with their lives and sometimes touching their best in moments of deep and secret unhappiness, delicately and completed, conveyed in a manner that few writers can approach. Mr. Merryn has succeeded in what Maupassant declared should be the realist's endeavour; to give a presentment of life more complete, more striking and more cogent than reality itself. Comparison with Chekhov is inevitable and we can be proud that an English playwright achieves so well what many thought only Chekhov could encompass. The construction is as tidy as that of Somerset Maugham. The truth of the characterisation is absolute.

The underlying theme of the play is the sad one, "It might have been," but on the ordinary level humour abounds. Gwynne Whitby gives a beautiful performance, silently expressing the inner emotions of Irene Surrey and conveying them to the audience. She speaks and moves with a quiet and simple naturalness that only a very gifted and disciplined actress can command. It may almost be said to be

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American Ice Skating Glamour Stars, who are appearing in the new edition of Tom Arnold's *Ice Revue* at the Stoll. Cecilia Colledge still heads the clever company of skaters.

Irene's tragedy that she has not grown old. Fred Surrey, her husband, is a more ordinary type. Lloyd Pearson makes us recognise his ordinariness and yet seem to see it for the first time. A similar triumph is achieved by Arnold English, who transmutes banality itself into something rich and strange and gives an admirable performance. An odd "Mr. Pim" kind of character, that might be an inconsequent excrescence or a disastrous irruption if not played with the delicately accurate touch of a master, is exquisitely presented by Richard Goolden, who has surely never done anything better. There are seven other characters in the story and all are portrayed in a manner to win admiration and carry complete conviction. H. G. M.

"Larry the Lamb"

THE late S. G. Hulme Beaman gave the denizens of Toy Town very crisp and unsentimental characters and made their imaginary existence something more than merely funny. He was a Macaulay of the Nursery and, while we treasure the stories he gave us, we must lament that he did not live to give us more. Larry the Lamb, rather like Brer Rabbit, has a keen eye to the main chance and uses his helpless innocence to good advantage. He is an important newcomer to childhood's Elysium.

A. A. Shenburn is presenting the *Adventures of Larry the Lamb* in a production by Hendrik Baker, who has also designed the settings, after S. G. Hulme Beaman's illustrations. Very attractive pictures are created and the numerous acting company engaged contains much talent and quite a few well-known names. The mock innocence and timid guile of Larry and his endearing bleat on long vowels are delightfully conveyed by Betty Blackler, very chic in a costume by Frank Stuart. Nothing is wanting to Larry. Sudden leaps when his heart is light, the turn-to of the round head as he briefly cogitates and the innocently reasoning manner of speaking; all is there and one can never have too much of it on these lines. Fred Essex nobly wears Ernest the Policeman's wide-eyed suspicion and bulky note-book. Raymond Rollett is a bland and affable Mayor, and Lawrence Hanray gives considerable character to Mr. Growser. H.G.M.

"Volpone"

IF ever an actor made a part his own it is Donald Wolfitt as Volpone. He has played it so frequently that it has taken on that second-nature mellow quality that can only come through long association between an actor and his role. Mr. Wolfitt so jealously loves this spectacular old rascal that no one is allowed to stand in his light. The play is produced so that he is always well to the centre of the stage, with the rest of the cast grouped about him in such



Alexander Bender

HERMIONE GINGOLD

starring with Henry Kendall in *Sweetest and Lowest*, J. W. Pemberton's record breaking revue, which has its first anniversary on Friday 9th May.



Swarbrick

DEREK BLOMFIELD

who gives a clever performance as the "guinea-pig" schoolboy in Warren Chetham Strode's successful play, *The Guinea-Pig*, now past its 500th performance at the Criterion.

a manner as to display him to the best advantage. Only once or twice during the evening do we get a fleeting glimpse of the handsome red fox tail that hangs from the collar down the centre of Volpone's back. It is fascinating to watch how cleverly Mr. Wolfit keeps that tail out of sight! John Wynyard, as the most active cog in the Ben Jonson plot, is the most useful member of the Wolfit company. Rosalind Iden hardly seems at ease in the part of Celia. Mr. Wolfit's colourful production of this lusty Elizabethan melodrama makes it the most attractive in his repertoire. E.J.

"Call Home the Heart"

WHILE Clemence Dane has not bowed the knee to facile writing in her new play: the language is courageously poetic, the final impression was that the theme was too trivial for the deep spiritual feeling engendered. The second Act was successful in tidying up the plot, but the whole never achieved complete artistic satisfaction.

We are, of course, by now sated with films and plays about the breakdown of marriages through wartime separations. In this case the wife Lydia (Valerie White), whose husband (William Fox) had been prisoner-of-war for years, had met a young officer in Alexandria (Bryan Coleman), while serving as a Wren. This was something more than a chance love affair, so that the homecoming of her husband was doubly an ordeal when he brings with him the lover, who, by a strange coincidence had been a fellow prisoner-of-war, not "missing, believed killed," as previously announced. This would have been a straightforward story but for the fact that Roylance, the lover, now a human wreck through enemy ill-treatment, puts in an early apparitional appearance as his old gay self. To the end it is never clear if this is a figment of Lydia's disordered mind or a thought-projection by Roylance himself. Sybil Thorndike contributes a lively piece of acting as Lydia's sentimental but self-centred mother, and Leon Quartermaine is Lydia's sympathetic and long suffering father. Shelagh Fraser as Hetty, the girl who had borne a child to Lydia's brother, David, later killed in the war, has a fresh and simple charm of her own; and Joan Newell did her best with Svava, the Polish refugee maid, an ill-conceived interloper in the plot. F.S.

"Noose"

ALL the excitement of old-time Drury Lane melodrama was recaptured when the Services' Sunday Society presented Richard Llewellyn's up-to-date play of Soho gangsterdom for a try-out at the Saville. The raid on a night club, to the accompaniment of screaming women, overturned tables, and tough hand-to-hand fighting,

DAVID PEEL

who plays the young son-in-law in *Less Than Kind*, Francois Mauriac's psychological study of a strange French family, now running at the Arts Theatre. His outstanding performances in *The King-maker* and *Marriage à la Mode*, at the St. James's last year, are still vividly remembered by playgoers.



caused a sensation in the audience. Never has stage realism been carried to such lengths. The story of the running-to-earth of a black-market prince made magnificent melodrama, played by a cast revelling in this meaty material. They "bashed on, regardless," as instructed in the first-night telegram which the author sent them from Rome. Charles Goldner's diabolical evil genius brooded over the entire play, and it is to be hoped that he will be seen in the same part if *Noose* eventually comes to the West End. Nigel Patrick's breezy Cockney assistant was responsible for much of the laughter which relieved the tension of this underworld story of rabbit-and-viper warfare. Reginald Tate directed the lengthy cast with a real sense of theatre. E.J.

"The Play's The Thing"

THIS gay and witty Molnar comedy, admirably produced and interpreted at the Lyric, Hammersmith, deserves a wider public than a limited run can attract. Clive Brook astonishes with the lightness of his touch both as producer and in the leading role of Sandor Turai. Satire and near-farce are agreeably combined and the pace never falters. Michael Shepley as the ridiculous discarded lover made to pay the price of his indiscretion by publicly acting in Turai's hastily written play, is the picture of injured stupidity. Irene Worth as the young Prima Donna musters more than the requisite glamour, while Paul Demel and Ian Lubbock complete with Clive Brook a most amusing theatrical "three musketeers." F.S.

"My Friend Lester"

WHEN a playwright on the stage is stuck for an idea, his domestic atmosphere usually reflects the fact. Lester Hudd's hiatus concerns a street walker, so what better than to invite Toto to come inside and provide factual inspiration?

(Continued on page 10)

(Right):

Joan Haythorne as Eve, Vivienne Bennett as The Serpent, and Adrian Cairns as Adam in Part I of the recent notable revival of Shaw's play at the Arts Theatre.



(Below):

George Hagan, Cameron Muller, Monica Stutfield, Geoffrey Dunn and Jean Short in a moment from Part IV.



"Back to Methuselah"

(Below):

Geoffrey Dunn as the He - Ancient with members of the Company in a scene from Part V.

The play was produced by Noel Willman.

● Bernard Shaw's mammoth five-part-play-cycle has just had its first London run in its entirety at the London Arts Theatre. It has previously been seen in London in its entirety on only two occasions: when Sir Barry Jackson staged it for special performances at the Court Theatre in 1924 and 1928. The play, which takes nine hours to perform, begins in the Garden of Eden and ends in the Golden Age, AD 3120. At the Arts, part one, and parts two and three were played on the same evening, parts four and five on separate evenings.



That she is then shot, leaving Lester to an agitated disposal of the body, is the substance of the play, but Alec Coppel's dream solution at the end lacks skill in execution.

Two resources help the play to recover from a slow start. Charles Goldner plays Mick, Toto's master, with an intensity of Latin emphasis, which provides welcome contrast to the vague headshakings, hair touselings and vocal abstractions of Richard Bird's Lester. And Linden Travers brings to his actress wife, condemned to a succession of convenient calls to the theatre next door, a charm and intelligence which no woman would waste on a Lester off the stage. F.J.D.

"Present Laughter"

THIS highly typical piece of Cowardese has the sophisticated enthralled at the Haymarket. It is not often that author, producer and star have the opportunity of witnessing every performance. In all three roles Mr. Coward must know by now that the play could run for ever.

Occasionally one has the uncomfortable feeling that Mr. Coward is laughing at us when all the time we thought we were laughing at him, and at the fantastic, hysterical and amoral characters who people Miss Gladys Calthrop's attractive decor. The more discerning will observe that this is not just witty and daring dialogue revolving around an outrageously

adolescent egocentric, but a most cunningly contrived play, with every exit and entrance fitted in almost geometrically.

Noel Coward again plays Garry Essendine, the actor-poseur, with that easy intimacy of manner, and Joyce Carey appears (as in the original version) as his wily and long-suffering wife who is adept in extricating him from his troubles. Moira Lister is a seductive temptress, and Robert Eddison gives a wildly amusing demonstration as the eccentric young dramatist. By contrast there is Joan Swinstead's imperturbability as the spoilt Garry's level-headed secretary. The other members of the cast, Avis Scott, Daphne Newton, Billie Thatcher, Gerald Case, Peter Gray and Gwen Floyd miss none of the opportunities offered by the author's polished and naughty lines. F.S.

"Together Again"

A WELCOME return from past nostalgic days is the Crazy Gang, who are with us again in Jack Hylton's new musical at the Victoria Palace. Bud Flanagan, Jimmie Nervo, Teddy Knox, Charlie Naughton and Jimmy Gold have lost none of their erstwhile dexterity, and the show owes a lot to their irrepressible high spirits.

Miss Ena Dell is leading lady and dances and sings with skill. Another high spot is the Radio Revellers, a male quartet of outstanding talent. L.J.

(Continued on page 32)

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Eileen Herlie as the Queen and James Donald as Stanislas, peasant-poet and would-be assassin.

"The Eagle has Two Heads"

AT THE GLOBE

PICTURES

BY

ANGUS

McBEAN

WHEN this play was first produced at the Lyric, Hammer-smith, Eileen Herlie was hailed as a young actress of brilliance, and with the transfer first to the Haymarket and recently to the Globe this opinion has been strengthened among enthusiastic playgoers. Those who had seen Miss Herlie previously had already recognised her great dramatic gifts and now eagerly await her appearance in other leading roles. Ronald Duncan's adaptation of Jean Cocteau's play does full justice to the lyric quality of a romantic Ruritanian tale. The atmosphere of love and intrigue in high places is conveyed with intensity and suspense and Murray MacDonald has directed the play with real insight.



Edith : Do you love the Queen, Maxim?

Edith de Berg, the Queen's lady-in-waiting (Cicely Paget-Bowman), once the Duke's lover, accuses him of loving the Queen. (Raymond Jaquarello as The Duke of Willenstein).



The Queen : One, two, three, four, five, death. One, two, three, four, five, death.

Alone in her bedroom in her castle at Kranz, the Queen keeps tryst with the memory of her husband assassinated on their wedding day ten years before.



The Queen : Frederick!

The Queen's long soliloquy in the imagined presence of her King, and to the accompaniment of a terrible thunderstorm, is first interrupted by shots from the grounds and then by the appearance of a young peasant who staggers wounded through the window. So great is his likeness to her dead husband that for the moment the Queen thinks he is an apparition.

The Queen: That's the King's portrait. You are very like the King.

The young man refuses to speak, though the Queen now guesses that he is the young poet agitator who has been detailed to assassinate her by a hostile political group.

The Queen: Well, what is it? What is it? I gave you my orders and you flatly disobey them. Why are you here? What is the matter? Are you ill?

Edith, suspicious that something unusual is happening, comes to the Queen and is severely rebuked. Stanislas, the intruder, is hidden from view.





Stanislas, who has maintained complete silence, finally faints from loss of blood, and the Queen orders her deaf-mute servant, Tony (Webber Alexander), to remove him from her room.

(Below):

Edith: You've heard what's happened?

Duke: I know the whole castle's upside down after last night's alarm. Don't say the man's still free?

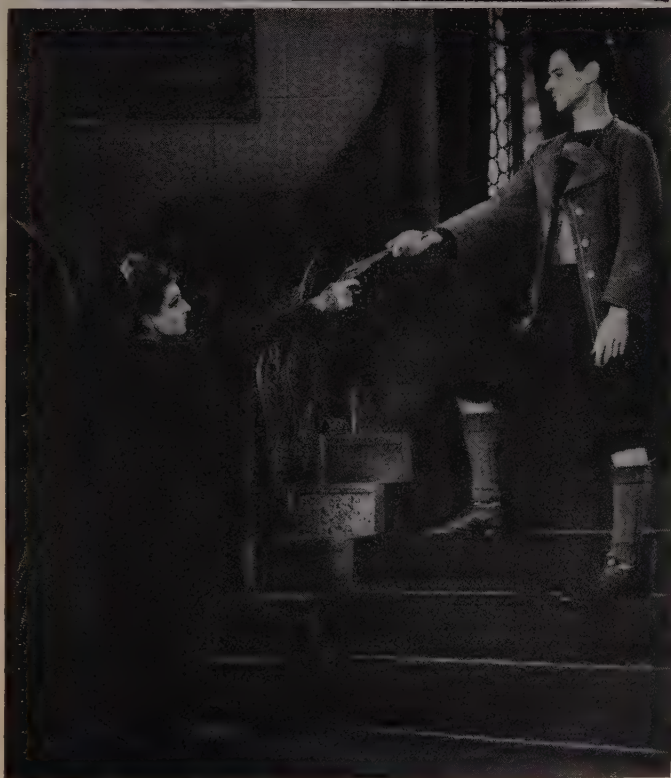
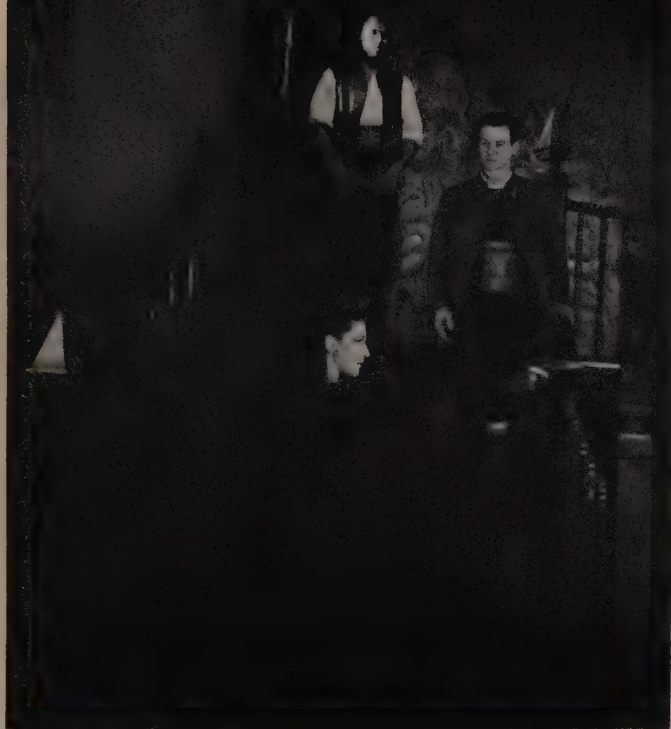
Edith: Yes, and in the castle.

The next evening in the Queen's library Edith tells the astonished Duke that the assassin has not been handed over to the police.



The Queen : Is that you, my friend? Don't be alarmed. I was merely putting in some target practice. I find I care less and less for hunting, but I enjoy shooting. Are you a good shot?

The next morning the Queen is at target practice in her library when Stanislas appears. It is obvious that her interest in the young man is growing and that he is bewildered by the trend of events. He discovers that she already knows by heart a scurrilous poem which he had written and circulated and which was aimed at discrediting her character and regime.



Stanislas : Shoot, shoot at my heart.

There now begins a new relationship between the Queen who would welcome death and the young man who would have killed her but now finds himself falling in love.



The Queen : I am most displeased, Edith. Your behaviour has become most indiscreet. I am afraid I must confine you to your room.

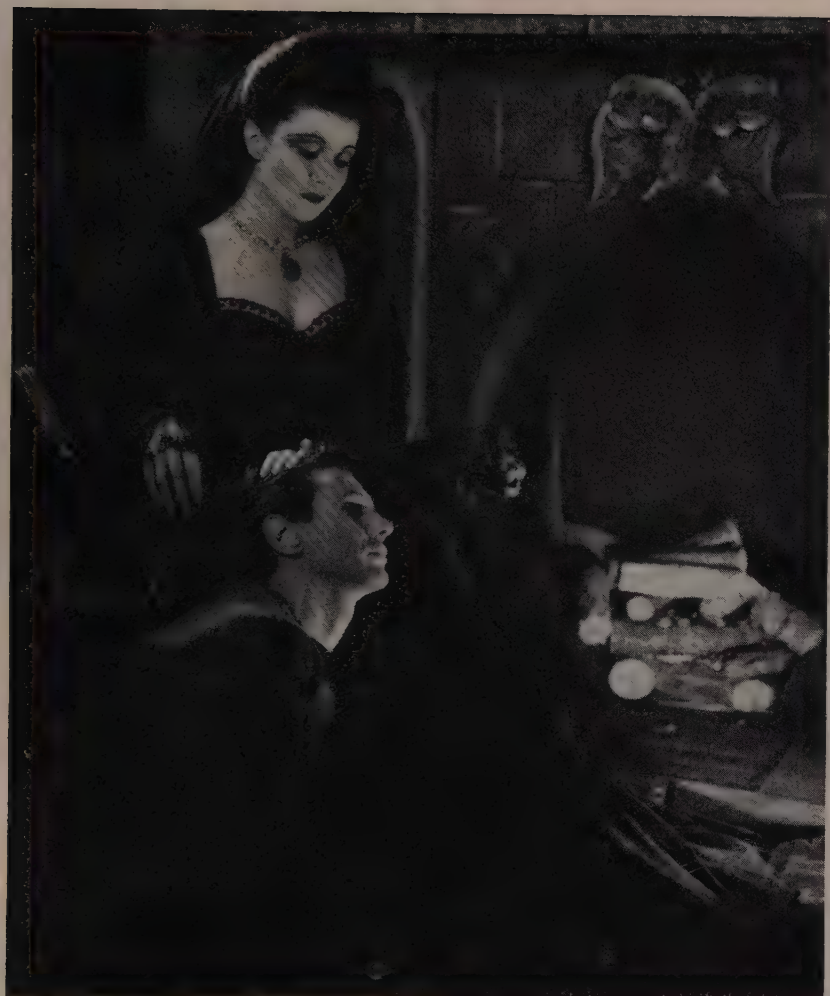
The Queen is aware of Edith's curiosity and resentment when Stanislas supplants her as the Queen's reader.

The Queen : And in spite of it all the man is still at large.

Baron : My men do not deserve your Majesty's scorn—they captured the man all right.

The Queen : How very interesting.

Baron Foehn (David Read), Chief of Police, who is also intriguing against the Queen, pays her a visit, ostensibly to tell her that the assassin has been captured, though he knows full well that this is not true and that Stanislas is enjoying the protection of the Queen.



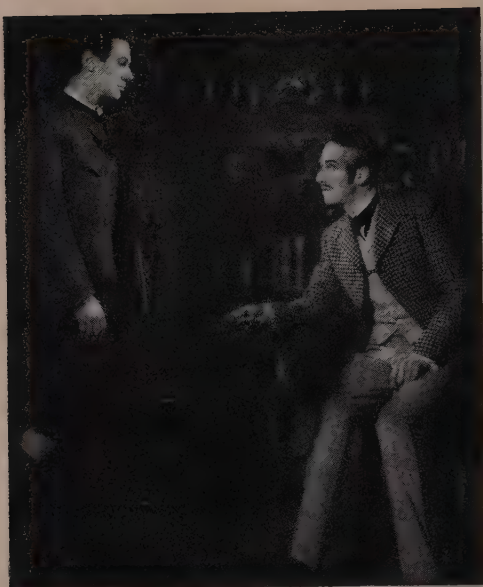
Stanislas : I love you. Now I know I could kill you so as not to lose you.

Stanislas declares his love for the Queen, but they realise that they are trapped and that the future is hopeless.

Edith : Don't go. I have a surprise for you. It is a message from the Baron—the Chief of Police.

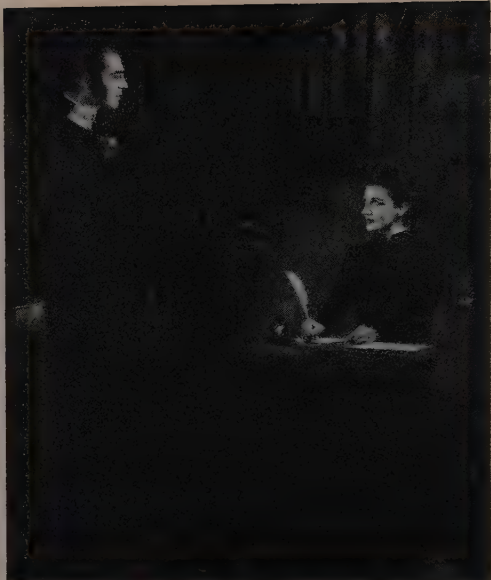
The net closes around the young poet: Edith is intriguing with the Baron to bring about his death.





Baron : You were sorting out some books—and her Majesty was thinking aloud — and you overheard? What a coincidence.

The Baron cross-examines Stanislas.



Queen : At the last relay post, you, Felix, are ordered to arrest the Baron Foehn.

Inspired by her new found love for the young peasant and by his high ideal of her duty as ruler of her people, the Queen makes one last bid to outwit the Baron and to regain her popularity by abandoning her role of recluse, and taking over the reins of government once more.



The Queen : Stand up. Are you such a coward you must crawl to death?

The closing moments of the play. Stanislas realising that he will be a stumbling block takes poison. Before he dies the Queen, pretending that she did not love him at all, but was only playing with his affections, incites him to kill her. Before she dies she staggers to the window to show herself to the people.



" La Fête Etrange "

June Brae, Antony Burke and Donald Britton (*centre*) in Andree Howard's ballet, a recent addition to the repertoire.

(Picture by Edward Mandinian).

Sadler's Wells Opera—Ballet

(*Right & Below*) : "The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains "

A commendable departure from the usual policy of Sadler's Wells Opera-Ballet was when Vaughan Williams' short opera *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* was included in the programme with ballet. Mr. Vaughan Williams' new work was highly praised and in the picture on the right Roderick Jones is seen as The Pilgrim (*centre*) with *L. to R.*: Rhys Williams, Norman Platt and John Higginson as The Shepherds. The scene below gives an idea of William Chappell's impressive set. Tom Culbert is seen in this picture (*centre*) as the Messenger. The opera, which is based on a scene from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, was first performed by the students of the Royal College of Music in 1922 and later during the Napier Miles season of opera at Bristol. (Pictures by Angus McBean).





YOLANDE DONLAN

starring in *Born Yesterday* at the Garrick.

(Portrait by Denis de Marney)

FEW American actresses have made us laugh quite so joyously as Yolande Donlan with her ingenious conception of Billie Dawn, the "dumb" ex-chorus-girl heroine of *Born Yesterday* at the Garrick. The sight of her registering the quintessence of vacuity as she walks up and down stairs is alone worth the price of admission.

No one knows better than Miss Donlan that comedy is something more than a matter of words. She gets laughs just as easily with gesture as with lines. The secret lies in the fact that Yolande set out to be a ballerina. The early training taught her to get the last ounce of expression out of her body.

She studied ballet for eight years, only to discover that she lacked the strength to pursue so exhausting a career. Those years were not wasted. She found the experience so valuable that she believes all students of dramatic art should take up ballet as part of their preparation for the stage. It at least teaches them how to walk properly, a problem to be mastered before tackling the more complicated aspects of acting. Some singing lessons do not come amiss, even for the straight actress, as they teach her how to place the voice.

Yolande's ballet training also accounts for the spontaneous freshness of her performance, just as captivating now as on her sensational London first night in January. A ballerina never considers that she

The Art of Being a Nit-Wit

By ERIC JOHNS

has finished learning her job. She is in continual contact with her ballet-master, who regularly attends to minor faults and adjustments. Having a ballet-trained mind, Yolande instinctively brings a more critical self-searching outlook to her work in the theatre.

After the play had been running over three months she took the script home one night to gain fresh light on it. Most actresses lose interest in the further development of their part after the first night. By that time they feel they have done all they can with the author's material and are content to give a slavish routine copy night after night. But not Yolande! If she had her way she would adopt the plan used on Broadway to keep long runs as fresh as the original production. The management engages a highly specialised "stage manager" who sits through the show about three times a week. He makes notes, and, as a result of his observations, the show is pulled together and not allowed to get ragged or out of hand.

"British and American theatre folk can teach each other a great deal," observed Yolande, after attending a performance by the Old Vic Company. "On that account I am all in favour of making travel as easy as possible between the two countries. The general level of the theatre would be improved if healthy international competition could be fostered. New York ought to see Oliverier's *Lear* and London would enjoy some of Broadway's musicals.

"At the moment there is little to tempt American artists to London, beyond the warm welcome they are certain of receiving from British playgoers. Even when they are paid what, on paper, appears to be a fabulous salary, it costs them money to come over and play in the West End. Accommodation is difficult enough to find, even for British citizens who have been bombed out of their homes. It is ten times worse for Americans who want to get settled in quickly and cannot be certain of the duration of their stay. Long leases are out of the question. The only alternative is hotel accommodation, which costs a fortune when one thinks in terms of suites. Frequently visiting artists have families with them. Maybe young children have to be brought over with them, and as their parents are playing every night, the services of a nanny have to be paid for. The home back in the States has to be maintained, and on the London salary 50 per cent. income tax has to be paid, as against

(Continued on page 29)



RODERICK LOVELL as Brachiano, MARGARET RAWLINGS as Vittoria, and ROBERT HELPMANN as Flamineo in a scene from the second part. In the House of the Convertites, Vittoria is visited by Brachiano, whom she reproaches for abandoning her to her fate.



DUCHESS THEATRE

"The White Devil"

● The first production of Duchess Plays Ltd., who have inaugurated an interesting new policy at one of London's most charming theatres, has been a notable theatrical event. Discriminating playgoers should not miss this most colourful revival of John Webster's dramatic play, which is brilliantly directed by Michael Benthall. Not the least of the attractions are the settings by Paul Sherriff and costumes by Audrey Cruddas. Music has been specially composed by John Simons.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN

(Left):

Robert Helpmann as Flamineo, which role he plays with rare insight and unflagging energy. He is, of course, Artistic Director of the Company with Michael Benthall.



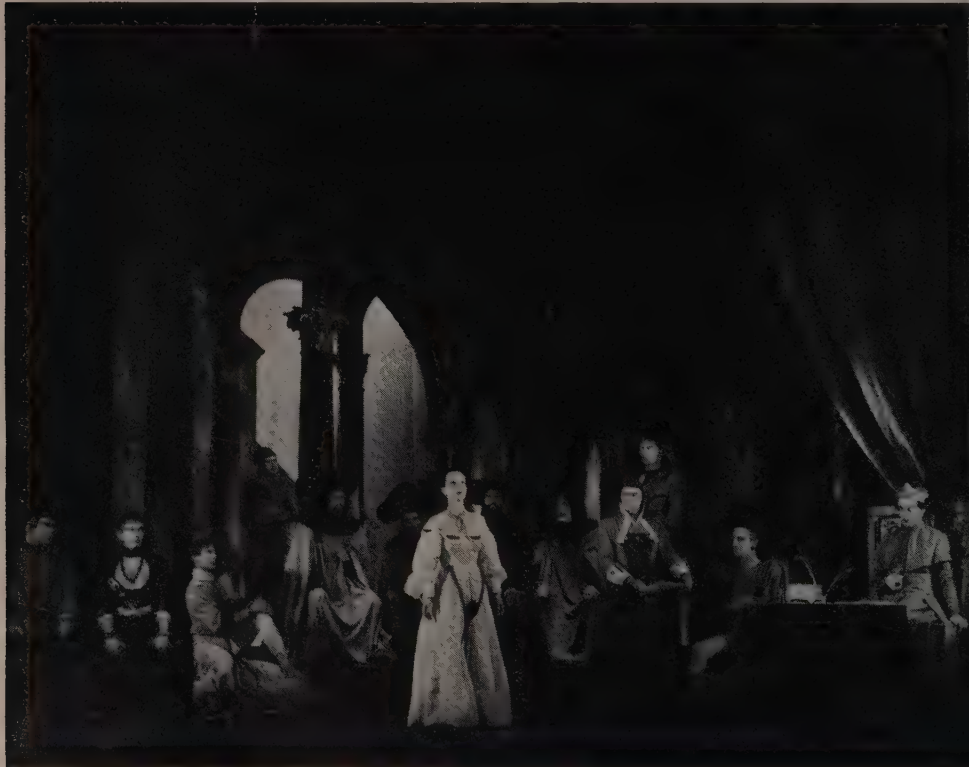
Vittoria tells the infatuated Brachiano of her dream, which foretells the violent death of her husband and his wife. Later, Brachiano plots to turn the events of the dream into reality.

(Below):

Another moment from the trial, which is one of the most brilliant scenes of the production.



Vittoria is arraigned before the Court on a charge of being a party to the murder of her husband. (L. to R.): Andrew Cruickshank as The Duke of Florence, John Toray as Gasparo, and Hugh Griffith as Cardinal Monticelso.



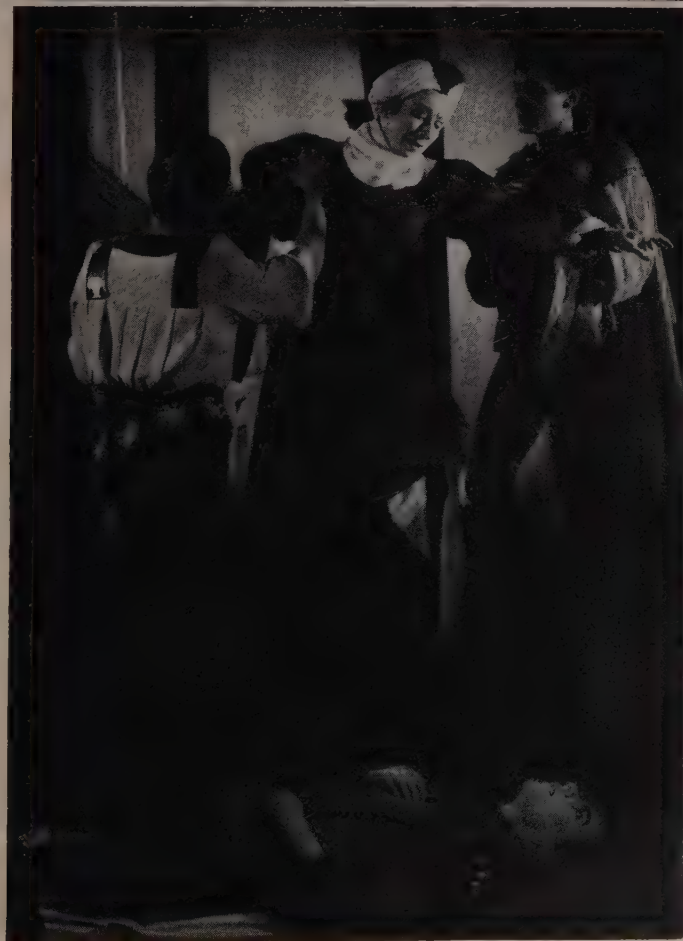
(Right):

The Duke inspects the Cardinal's black book containing lists of evil-doers in the city. These two, following Vittoria's banishment to the House of Con-vertites, plot the destruction of her entire family.



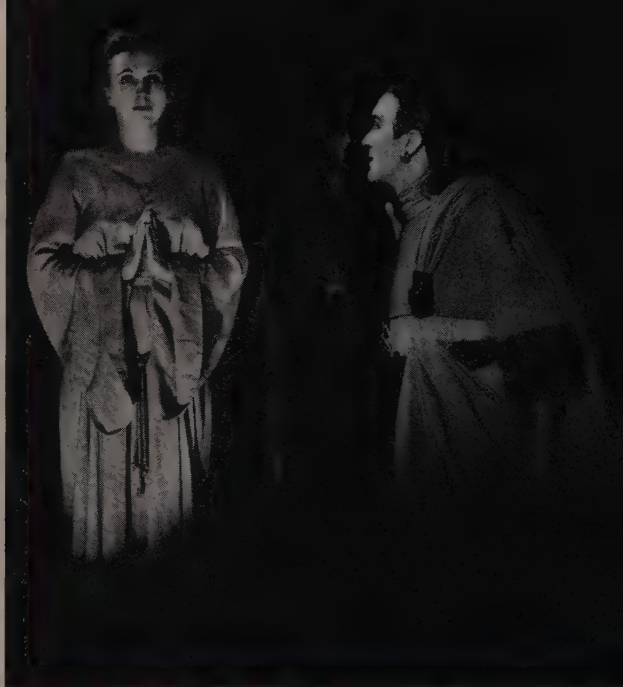
(Right):

Cornelia, mother of Vittoria and her brothers, gazes at the dead body of her son Marcello, slain, after a quarrel, by his evil brother, Flamino. (Martita Hunt as Cornelia, Gordon Davies (on ground) as Marcello).



(Right):

The ghost of Isabella, murdered at the instigation of her husband, Brachiano, appears to her brother, the Duke of Florence, who has sworn to seek vengeance on those responsible for the evil deed. (Joan Schofield as Isabella).



(Below):

Flamineo with Zanche, his mistress and Vittoria's Moorish maid. (Mayura as Zanche).



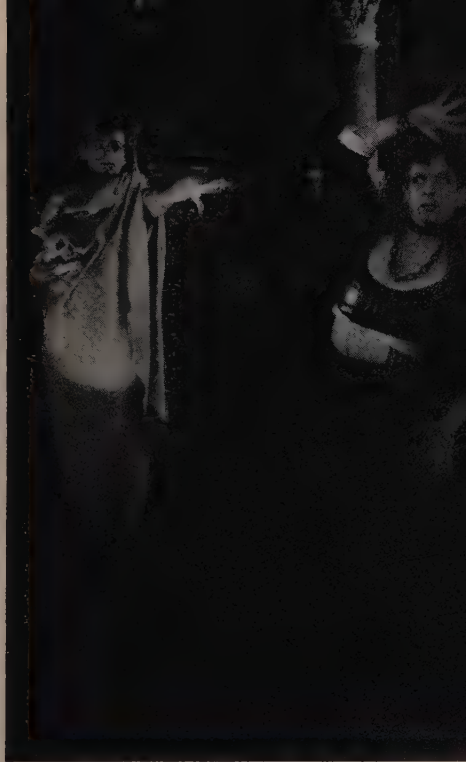
(Below):

Vittoria comforts the dying Brachiano, who has been poisoned at the instigation of his arch enemy, the Duke of Florence. Hereafter the play grows in murderous intensity, and crime follows crime.



(Below):

Cornelia, the tragic mother, is driven out of her mind after the slaying of her son by his own brother. A moving scene from part two.



(Above):

Flamineo is confronted by the ghost of Brachiano, shortly before he is to meet his own violent end.



(Left):

The tragic last moments of the play. Vittoria, "The White Devil," meets her death at the hands of hired assassins, while Flammineo, forced to witness the grim scene, is their last victim, and dies alone in agony as the curtain falls.



Angus McBean

MARGARET RAWLINGS

who gives a brilliant performance as
Vittoria in *The White Devil*.

SO many of us would like our time over again, but only with the added benefit of our previous experience! Impossible as it sounds, such a miracle seems to have happened to Margaret Rawlings. Five years ago, after the Gielgud revival of *Dear Brutus*, playgoers recall with regret that this actress "retired" from the stage. She became so engrossed in a new life and new interests that it seemed she had bade a final farewell to the footlights. Now she is back again, starring in *The White Devil* at the Duchess, enjoying an actress's life all over again, enriched by the experience of her previously distinguished career.

Having re-married during the war, Miss Rawlings took up residence in an attractive farmhouse in the Chilterns. The soil looked wretched and had not produced much more than weeds for something over a generation, so she decided to work as a farm labourer. She spent hours a day driving a tractor and gained enormous satisfaction in helping to convert an area of bramble-infested land into a fertile field, as pretty as a picture. For her this became the ideal life, amid newly-found domestic happiness.

Whispers from the Wings

by LOOKER-ON

Then, one day last summer, John Gielgud reappeared on the horizon. He invited her to return to the stage to play before Royalty in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Haymarket. She accepted and re-entered a stage door as an actress, after a lapse of five years. One lovely, sunny day during rehearsals, she met one of her country neighbours in the street. The woman remarked that it was a pity to have to go into a dark and dusty theatre on such a glorious afternoon. Quickly reviewing the situation, Miss Rawlings realised her friend was talking nonsense. Of course it was not a pity. There was nothing she would prefer to do. When it came to the test her attraction to the theatre was as strong as ever.

Domesticity in the Chilterns with her husband and her 3½-years-old daughter, Jane, means just about as much as the theatre. Under the present arrangement at the Duchess she is able to enjoy both in alternating sequences. It is the policy of the present management to stage plays for limited runs of roughly three months' duration. She is not necessarily in every play, so her time can be pleasantly divided between the land and the stage.

This return to the theatre, playing sister to Robert Helpmann, is one of her happiest engagements. She can more or less claim to have discovered this young man for the English stage. Away back in 1932 she went to Australia to play Elizabeth in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. She saw Helpmann dancing in pantomime at the theatre where she was subsequently to give her season. She was so struck with his talent for mime that she invited him to join her company and play the youngest brother. He accepted and acquitted himself so well that she and Gabriel Toyne decided that Helpmann should try his luck in London. They had such enormous faith in him that they even offered to pay his fare back to Australia if he failed over here. On their arrival in this country they arranged for him to meet Ninette de Valois, who made that historic remark, "I ought to be able to do something with that face!" Miss Rawlings was never called upon to pay the return fare.

While this actress has been away a new public of intelligent theatregoers has cropped up. She is fascinated by letters she receives regularly from youngsters of 18, who could only have been 13 when she "retired." Her previous triumphs as Kitty O'Shea, Salome and Eliza Doolittle mean nothing to them. She is a new actress as far as they are concerned, and they are a new public to her. It is all rather exhilara-

(Continued on page 31)

BY OUR
AMERICAN
CORRESPONDENT

E.
MAWBY
GREEN

James Mason as King David and Pamela Kellino as Bathsheba in the American production of Jacques Duval's play, which has not been well-received on Broadway. Horace Braham is seen in the background.



Echoes from Broadway

LAST month we started to chronicle the adventures of James Mason as he started to work his way to Broadway as King David in Jacques Deval's *Bathsheba*. We left him taking over the direction of the play and trying to turn the Biblical drama into a sophisticated comedy. But being star, director and also re-write man proved too much even for Mason, and a hurry call went out to New York for a new director. The little-known Coby Ruskin was finally selected for the job, he being quite willing to re-stage the tragedy as comedy.

The next stop on the road was Philadelphia, where a heavy advance sale was piled up. However, after the adverse notices and unfavourable word-of-mouth hardly a ticket was sold over the counter and absolutely no refunds were made. And then at one performance, the City of Brotherly Love decided to show its hospitality and out of the orchestra and on to the stage came a cash customer and stopped the proceedings with a few well-chosen words to the following effect: "You stink,

Mr. Mason! Why don't you go back to England?" Mr. Mason threw something at the intruder who was finally ejected from the theatre and in true tradition the play went on. This incident cracked almost all the newspapers and some cynics, recalling the ads. Mr. Mason used to take out in England advising the public not to see him in a movie he considered bad, thought the whole thing a publicity stunt. This the management denied, saying the story cost them \$40,000 in cancellations for the New York engagement.

To add to the management's woes, the Sunday before the show opened in New York an interview with Mr. Mason appeared in the *New York Times* in which the star calmly announced that he expected both he and the play to be roundly panned by the critics. He was not disappointed. The rave notice that we quoted last month from *Variety* will be the only kind words he will have to show from this engagement.

The play, as to be expected, is neither comedy nor tragedy, but a colossal bore

bordering on bad taste. And Mr. Mason's performance is astonishingly uninteresting. Never for a moment does he suggest a kingly quality; many of his gestures and movements are borrowed from Olivier only on the stiff Mason they don't look so good, and worst of all his voice very often takes on a high, thin, nasal tone which is most unattractive. But comparatively speaking, he's better than his wife, Pamela Kellino, who plays the title role. As the warm, seductive Bathsheba who captures the eye of the jaded King, she's pure ice without an emotion in her body. It's a small part as far as sides go, but in the uncomplimentary sense she makes it seem a good deal longer than it is. Perhaps the Masons had better stick to the movies, which they say they like better than the stage, anyhow.

Financially speaking, the play is putting up a struggle at the box office, and it is reliably reported that the women in the audience outnumber the men about ten to one. However, we don't believe it will be too long before there will be more people waiting outside the stage door for Mr. Mason's autograph than inside the theatre watching his performance.

Another fabulous character stalking the boards in an equally fabulous play is Tallulah Bankhead in Jean Cocteau's *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, adapted from the French by Ronald Duncan. A current success in both London and Paris, New York has absolutely no use for it. This romantic melodrama of a queen in love with death floods the stage with so many words and all of such a purple hue and creaks so loudly with its phoney theatrics, that even with the tempestuous Tallulah pulling every trick in Stanislavski's handbook, is unable to keep the audience from coming down with a bad case of ennui.

As for the political allegory pertinent to our times which is said to be incorporated in *The Eagle Has Two Heads*, nobody over here knows where or how to start looking for it and what's more cares less. We wonder if anybody in England has discovered it.

As usual Tallulah brought out her fanatical following but even so, after twenty-nine performances, producer-director John C. Wilson will be closing the show although Donald Oenslager's massive settings look like they were built to last at least 2,900 performances.

A few nights after the successful launching of Norman Krasna's new farce-comedy, *John Loves Mary*, by the brilliant producing team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd, we rather rudely listened in on three young producers talking during the intermission of a flop. Two of them have yet to produce a hit, while the third has one success, one failure and one in-between to his credit. The two ciphers

were complaining why they couldn't get their hands on a script like *John Loves Mary*, to which the third shrewdly said: "What good would it do you? In your hands it would be closing Saturday night." The point is that Mr. Krasna's play, in spite of a funny premise, is a good deal thinner than his previous success, the slight *Dear Ruth*, and without expert handling would have faded from the scene in no time whatsoever.

The amusing idea starts with John Lawrence (William Prince) returning from overseas to his fiancée, Mary McKinley (Nina Foch), daughter of Senator and Mrs. James McKinley (Loring Smith and Ann Mason), who wants to marry him at once. But John is in no position to take the marital vow, that is, for six weeks. It seems that his best friend overseas, Fred Taylor (Tom Ewell) had saved his life and John is naturally indebted to him. Fred also managed to fall in love with a little cockney dancer in England, Lily Herbish (Pamela Gordon) but never got the chance to marry her. With the United States immigration laws what they are, Lily can't get to America except as a bride of a GI. So John, thinking he will do Fred a good turn, marries Lily and brings her to the US with the understanding that he will divorce her immediately in Reno, which takes six weeks. A situation like this should build to something hilarious but somehow *John Loves Mary* manages to stay on an even keel, providing plenty of laughs but no cumulative excitement. And that's Mr. Krasna's fault, not his cast's or his director's, for the Messrs. Rodgers and Hammerstein secured Joshua Logan, one of the top directors for this type of material, apparently by offering to produce the play in association with him. But whatever the deal, Mr. Logan wrangled for himself, he's worth every penny of it. He has his skillful cast milking every line for a laugh and not settling for anything less than a giggle, and some guffaws he manages to get out of the thin air and no place else.

Of special interest in the cast is Pamela Gordon, Gertrude Lawrence's daughter, who is making her Broadway debut as the cockney dancer. She replaced Ida Lupino's sister, Rita, during rehearsal period and is giving a good account of herself. She looks and speaks remarkably like her famous mother and at times you would swear it was Gertie on the stage.

Richmond Theatre

It was stated in our March issue that Andrew and Winifred Melville are now lessees of the Richmond Theatre. This is incorrect, as the Melvilles are not lessees, but co-directors of the theatre with Frederick Piffard and Alan Miles. They are, of course, still carrying on their work at the Palace Theatre, Watford.

The Art of Being a Nit-Wit

(Continued)

20 per cent. tax in America. If British playgoers wonder why they do not see more Broadway stars in the West End, here are some of the answers!

"As soon as building materials become more plentiful I hope scenery on the British stage will become more solid in construction. From the front of the house there is not much difference between a solid wooden door and a canvas frame cleverly painted to look like a door. Yet there is just that subtle touch of realism about a real door which makes all the difference to an audience's enjoyment of a play. Solid sets are in favour on Broadway. Some are solid enough to live in. The kitchen scene in *The Voice of the Turtle* is an absolute replica of the real thing, with a working stove, a refrigerator and a sink with running water.

"The character of Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday* is so 'dumb' that it has sometimes been charged with exaggeration. When I was a dancer I worked in Earl Carroll shows, where I had first hand opportunity of observing the mannerisms of chorus girls, being one myself. Some of these girls were exactly like Billie Dawn. Alas, she has been drawn from life, and not burlesqued!

"Knowing this type so well, I was delighted to see the show in New York, so brilliantly played by Judy Holliday. It was the part of a lifetime. I longed to play it. I felt it was so right for me that I determined to move heaven and earth to play it. I was too late to get cast for the touring company, but accepted the understudy in the same company by way of compensation. After two weeks on the road the leading lady fell ill and I took over. The author, Garson Kanin, rushed out to see how his show was faring under such difficulties. I am glad to say that he was sufficiently pleased with the performance to cable at once to Laurence Olivier saying that a suitable Billie Dawn had been found for London. Olivier took the risk of buying a pig in a poke, and here I am at the Garrick!

"The thought of an eventual successor to this part is rather frightening, as Billie's nit-wittery has evoked so much laughter and comment. I naturally don't want to follow-up my success with a carbon copy of the same sort of part. I rather fancy a fey part, after the mercenary set-up of *Born Yesterday*—something with a touch of unreality about it. But whatever happens, having played in London with a British company under the superb direction of Laurence Olivier, will always remain a great experience and a cherished memory for me. For even if I make quite a convincing nit-wit, I hope I'm not a fool!"

In the News

OWEN
HOLDER

24-year-old London born actor, who has made a great personal success as Smith, the "spiv" in *Now Barabbas*, the play of prison life at the Vaudeville. This is his first West End appearance but he has made a big impression in repertory, notably as Romeo at York, and as Oswald in *Ghosts* with the Wilson Barrett Co.



(Right):

MOIRA
LISTER

who plays with distinction the role originally acted by Judy Campbell, in the revival of Noel Coward's *Present Laughter* at the Haymarket, was recently seen in the John Clements' season at the St. James's.



(Left):

SIMON
LACK

one of our coming young actors, who hails from Scotland, and is now appearing with Yvonne Arnaud in *Jane*, in a role that calls for considerable skill and understanding.

(Portrait by Alexander Bender)



(Right):

IRENE
WORTH

young American actress, who is giving a delightful performance in *The Play's The Thing*, at the Lyric, Hammer-smith. Miss Worth made her first London appearance a year ago in *The Time of Your Life*, and has since been seen in *Love Goes to Press*.



The Summer Festivals

by PENELOPE TURING

EVERYONE has their own ideal of the perfect holiday, but with a climate as temperamental as ours probably the people whose pleasure is not entirely dependent on the weather will have the best of it, and for those whose bent is towards the theatre 1947 has much to offer.

One of the most interesting prospects of the season is the International Festival of Music and Drama at Edinburgh. It is refreshing in a world still suffering from the aftermath of war to find that enthusiastic people have been planning this Festival, which in addition to attracting visitors from abroad will provide a stimulating holiday for many of us over here. For three weeks from 24th August to 13th September there will be a series of orchestral concerts and recitals given by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, L'Orchestra Colonne, the Hallé Orchestra, the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Scottish Orchestra and the BBC Scottish Orchestra, and including such conductors as Bruno Walter, John Barbirolli and Malcolm Sargent. During the whole Festival the Glyndebourne Opera will give alternate performances of Mozart's *Le Nozze di*

Figaro and Verdi's *Macbeth*, and for the first fortnight ballet will be represented by the Sadler's Wells Company with Robert Helpmann and Margot Fonteyn in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and drama by the Old Vic Company in a new play by James Bridie and one Shakespeare play. For the final week the Old Vic will be followed by the Compagnie Louis Jouvet with a repertoire of classical and modern French plays. Here is indeed a feast to suit all tastes! In some ways it is a pity that the English theatre will be represented only by one London acting unit, but we can at least be sure of the quality of the Old Vic's work, and after the successful visit of the Comédie Française to London in 1945 much interest will be aroused by the advent of Louis Jouvet's company.

From new experiments in Scotland to the perennial seat of drama by the Avon: here is another Festival as truly international as any, and so it has always proved. Edinburgh's assemblage of the arts, for example, might take place in any country, but Stratford is the only true home of a Shakespeare festival. 1947 marks the second year of Sir Barry Jackson's directorship at Stratford, and both his supporters and his critics will look forward to the results of his new policy with interest. There were several innovations last year including that of spacing out the productions so that they were introduced into the repertory at regular intervals right through the season. This year so as to provide more variety during the first weeks, four of the 1946 plays have been carried forward and there will be six in the repertory by 9th May, which will be good news for the visitor who chooses Stratford in the spring. There are to be nine plays in all: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Pericles* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. But I am afraid there is news to dash the hopes of those who still hanker after seeing eight different plays in one crowded week of glorious life—apparently only six productions will be in the repertory at any one time, as new ones are added others will be withdrawn. The company of fifty is the largest Stratford has known and is headed by Robert Harris, Beatrix Lehmann, Walter Hudd, Veronica Turleigh and Paul Scofield, who made a great impression on festival playgoers last year.

It is a pity that the Shaw Festival at Malvern is not to be revived this year, and admirers of the Shavian art must hope for better luck in 1948, but a short festival of Elgar's music is to be given there by the

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Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra from 15th-18th July, which will bring music lovers to the slopes of the Malverns.

North, Midlands, West and last but not least South-East. The Canterbury Festival is to be resumed this year from 21st-28th June for the first time since 1939, financed by the two special matinées of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, given at the Lyric on 3rd and 4th February. The Festival which first introduced this great play to the world and has other notable productions to its credit, hopes to present a new play by Mr. Laurie Lee, *Festival of the Singing Church*, as well as Sir Sydney Nicholson's opera, *The Children of the Chapel*, and Haydn's *The Creation* for the twentieth-century pilgrims to Canterbury.

Here then is a wide choice both of time and subject, and even if the fates prevent our taking advantage of it, there is at least food for day dreams with the help of a Bradshaw.

Items

Leslie Banks and Sophie Stewart are the Father-and-Vinnie team in Firth Shephard's production of *Life With Father*, which opens at the Savoy Theatre on 5th June.

Various described as "a national institution," "Public entertainment No. 1," *Life With Father* is now in the eighth year of its run on Broadway. It was produced on 8th November 1939 at the Empire Theatre and is now playing at the Bijou Theatre. It is estimated that six million people have seen this play in America and Canada.

Life With Father is written by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse from stories of his own family by Clarence Day.

Tennent Plays Ltd. will shortly stage the American success *Deep Are The Roots* by James Gow and Arnaud d'Usseau, who wrote *Tomorrow The World*. Four members of the New York Company are coming over for the London production. The director will be Peter Cotes.

H. M. Tennent Ltd. will also produce in the near future *Angel*, the play, set in 1860, by Mary Hayley Bell, author of *Duet for Two Hands*. Directed by John Mills, the cast is headed by Joyce Redman and Alan Webb.

Emlyn Williams is leaving the cast of *The Winslow Boy*, which is still doing capacity business at the Lyric to appear with Francoise Rosay in his latest play *Trespass*, which, presented by H. M. Tennent Ltd., will open a short pre-London tour at Manchester on 9th June. *Trespass* is described by the author as a ghost play in six scenes. It is set in the present day in a castle in Wales, but it is not a story of Welsh life.

Oak Leaves and Lavender, Sean O'Casey's latest play, is to be presented by Una Plays Ltd., and Tennent Plays Ltd., at the Lyric, Hammersmith, in mid-May after a short tour. The piece is set, not in Ireland, but in the West Country of England, and the company includes Mary Hinton and Sheila Sim. The director is Ronald Kerry.

The Centaur Theatre Company started its first season at the Rudolf Steiner Theatre on 1st May with Oscar Wilde's *Salome* and *Sweeney Agonistes*, by T. S. Eliot. Peter Zadek is producing. The music is specially composed for this performance by Josef Horowitz, and the dance of the seven veils indicated in the play has been created by Ernest Berk.

The Company is run on a co-operative basis and is non-profit making. It is aimed to create a company of lasting value whose aim will be to attain artistic perfection by working as a team.



Hamilton Studios

MONA INGLESBY and JACK SPURGEON

in Act I of *Giselle*. The International Ballet Company have now begun their summer tour, during which they will be paying a visit to Dublin—the first British company to do so since 1939. Nana Gollner, who made a deep impression in the Company's new and successful production of *Swan Lake*, and Paul Petroff will continue to dance with the Company during the tour.

Whispers from the Wings (Continued)

ting when each finds the other so enjoyable an experience.

Her daughter, Jane, is her youngest admirer. She saw Miss Rawlings recently in *The Fairy Queen* at Covent Garden, but has not seen *The White Devil*, as she adores her mother and could not stand the sight of anyone ill-treating her, even on the stage. She was taken to the dressing room to see her mother attired in that memorable white dress and was permitted to accompany her as far as the wings. Not knowing a thing about the white-robed fiend of Webster's blood-curdling play, she whispered, with child-like innocence, "You look like a white princess!" At home the play has since been known not as *The White Devil*, but as *The White Princess*!

NEW SHOWS OF THE MONTH (Cont.)

"Richard II"

WHAT sort of man was this Richard? How did he really appear to the mind of Shakespeare? These two questions must determine our attitude to any rendering of this most poetic of Shakespeare's histories. Was this king merely a self-indulgent weakling, unfit to govern, as it has sometimes been affirmed? Or was the tragedy of his life the fact that he was born in the wrong century, environed by circumstances to which his temperament was ill-adjusted? The interpretation given by Alec Guinness in the present Old Vic production justifies the latter view. While he handles the poetry in a competent manner, the major effort is to portray the man. To appreciate this we should set it in an imaginary glimpse of the England of the time, and of the nature of the royal court. Recall some of the ingredients in the situation. A boy made king at the age of ten; wedded at fifteen, and growing up in a court saturated in foppish, highly artificial Italianate influences, set in an England seething with economic discontent, with revolution smouldering into a flame. Here was the forcing ground for an unstable precocity, and it is the clue to so much that we find in Richard. Even so, had he been called to rule in the more placid days of the 18th century he would have had a setting more congenial to his type of mind. For as we watch the Richard of Alec Guinness we can appreciate the nobler strands in this young king. He craved for peace. He had no taste for the turbulent passions of his time, and for the murderous intrigues and ambitions which had their nest in his own court. He loved the soil of England with a fervour deep and genuine. Mr. Guinness does full justice to this in the significant stoop to touch the soil on the return from the Irish expedition to meet rebellion in England, "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand." Yes, there is weakness, of course. A shallow blindness to the realistic vision and prophetic warning of old John of Gaunt, an exhibition of youthful arrogance increased, maybe, by the forced precocity of which he was the victim. Yet, no genuine weaking could rise to the touch of greatness which the ultimate tragedy unveils, and which Alec

Guinness plays to the full in the prison scene; and then reveals how death is met with towering courage.

There is an over-easy and unbalanced trust in a special providence. "God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay a glorious angel." But does not Shakespeare see shrewdly that this, though in less theological form, is the besetting weakness of the typical Englishman, who through his history tends to substitute some kind of providence in place of thought and action? Trust in "muddling through" as we call it. Strange to say so much in our national history seems to justify this happy-go-lucky attitude. But one recurrent thought in Shakespeare is that such a view is only tolerable when England is at peace within her gates. Strife and division within are the mortal foes. It is this fact which makes John of Gaunt a prophetic figure, and his dying speech lives again in the eloquent rendering of Ralph Richardson, conveying to us all the passionate, loyal love of the old patriot for the dear Country, now torn and humiliated by shallow frivolity and ignored responsibility in high places, and feud and strife among the people.

Harry Andrews gives a convincing picture of Bolingbroke: a complex character of personal ambition, arrogance and pride, yet mingled with a genuine patriotism and angry impatience with the follies and failures of those around him.

Much could be said of all the other work of this splendid cast. From Lewis Casson and Nicholas Hannen we should expect fine work, and we get it to the full. Rosalind Atkinson speaks but few lines as the Duchess of Gloucester, but in them proves both the genius of Shakespeare and her own splendid capacity for interpretation. It is true to say that every other member of the company maintains this high level.*

However, there is not only a fine evening's entertainment here. There is the message of England's great prophet speaking to our land in this year of grace 1947.

L. J.

* This they achieved against the background of an unfortunate decor. Michael Warre has demonstrated his skill in other productions and there is much to be said for experiment, but we should have preferred simple curtains to these attenuated pillars, whose symbolism, if any, escaped us entirely.

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OPERA

"Rosenkavalier"

THE season at Covent Garden reached a new high level with this delightful production of the Richard Strauss opera. Orchestra and singers alike were at the top of their form, demonstrating a new confidence which augurs well for the future of opera in England.

Chief surprise was the performance of Doris Dorée, who as the Princess sang with unusual depth of feeling, revealing a voice of splendid quality and range, and an acting ability only too rare on the opera stage in this country. Again, we were surprised in Victoria Sladen's Octavian: she conveyed the tender emotion of a love-sick boy with real understanding and her voice was always equal to her none too easy task. Virginia MacWatters was a refreshingly youthful Sophie, and if David Franklin's Baron Ochs lacked the Falstaffian rotundity of form and spirit we should have liked it is far from easy to be dogmatic about the playing of this difficult part. Joan Cross produced and it is to her experienced touch and insistence on good acting as well as singing that much of the success is due. Robin Ironside's scenery and costumes were a pleasing ingredient of the whole.

F.S.

R.A.D.A. Annual Matinee

TO mark the close of term, students in the final division at the RADA played their annual matinee with marked efficiency on 1st April at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue. The standard of acting reached a high and consistent level, going from Wilde to Shaw and taking in the Bard, aided and abetted by Clemence Dane's *Will Shakespeare*.

The playing throughout must have given the judges—Emlyn Williams, A. V. Cookman, Marie Löhr, Edward Percy, G. B. Stern—a headache. The Bancroft gold medal was awarded to Patricia Kneale for her playing of the name part in Maurice Maeterlinck's *Mary Magdalene*. This last scene from the play was best produced by Hugh Miller, and his direction went a long way to aid Miss Kneale's success. A few words of praise must go to Guy Kingsley-Poynter for his splendid interpretation of

the Roman Centurion, for which he was awarded a special medal.

Second best, the Academy silver medal, went to Carmel McGarry for her performance in the part of Florrie Small in a scene from *The Likes of 'Er*. She was well supported in this scene by Harold Goodwin, who shows great promise, and Romany Evans.

The Bronze medal was given to Brian Wilde, who had ample opportunity of showing his ability, for his name appeared in three out of the six excerpts in the programme. It would be hard to say on which performance his award was made. This young man played Mr. Coade in Barrie's *Dear Brutus* at the same theatre last December, and was awarded the Emile Littler prize. He is an actor of promise. Two other fine performances came from Jacqueline Fielding and Yvonne Forster in Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*, both of whom played with a keen understanding of comedy rarely seen in drama students.

An unusual feature of the selection of plays was scenes from Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*. A most unfortunate affair, it produced one creditable performance from Peter Dinshaw as Napoleon, and Elizabeth Keen as Marie-Louise.

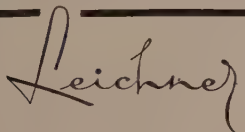
We also had pleasure in witnessing the talent of Miss Karis Mond as the Empress Mother of Russia. Miss Mond is now actively associated with the Under-Thirty Group of Actors as its director.

Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* gave opportunity to Peter Hatton, which he took with great advantage in the part of Valentine. He has since been put under contract by H. M. Tennent Ltd. We look forward to the future of these people who have distinguished themselves so early in their careers in the theatre. It must be remembered that one year ago on this auspicious occasion Daphne Slater walked away with the Bancroft gold medal—and this season she is appearing as Juliet at Stratford-upon-Avon!

RICHARD HEARNE.

THE MANDER/MITCHESON COLLECTION

Paul Lamb is responsible for the decorations for the two interesting theatrical exhibitions, "The Past of Theatres Present," and "Jenny Lind in London, 1947," at the Duchess and the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, which were mentioned in our last issue.



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Amateur Stage

PACIFIC 1860 has concluded its professional run of nearly four months at Drury Lane. It remains to assess the appeal of this Noel Coward musical play for amateur operatic societies.

The great scarcity of suitable new musical works from the professional stage in recent years is a factor to bear in mind. Its importance lies in this—that if a new work as done by professionals is not quite suitable, but could be made so by a little adaptation, then it is well worthy of consideration.

That seems to sum up the amateur merits of the Drury Lane version of *Pacific 1860*. As it stands, it is not a strong proposition for amateurs, but it could be made an acceptable one. Three alterations would help.

Choral work needs strengthening, in the provision of more concerted numbers and possibly some dancing. Scene three of Act II, the Harbour, with the departure of the ship, could be dropped entirely, so saving one heavy set, without impairing the story. Dancing could be more varied, but the addition of some comedy material would be most welcome.

So adapted, *Pacific 1860* would be a fresh addition to our musical resources. Its story of the singer finding love on a Pacific island, renouncing it for her professional career and then returning to her lover is trite enough. But the setting is a colourful one. Musically it is not distinguished, but there is some reasonable work for trios or six or more voices.

No one would claim that the author of this musical romance had the amateur market at the back of his mind when preparing it, but in deciding its future, the owners of the play might give such a possibility their consideration.

Sunday matinee and evening marionette shows are in progress, under the auspices of Hampstead Artists' Council, at Studio House, 1 Hampstead Hill Gardens, NW3.

Owing to illness, the performance of *Merry Wives of Windsor* in the courtyard of the George Inn, Southwark, by the Overian Masque Company, has been postponed to 4.30 p.m. on 26th April.

Alan Turner Opera Company revived the operetta *The Queen's Lace Handkerchief*, first given its British premiere by them in 1937, for their recent production at Derby. Ballet was introduced.

With the gradual removal of restrictions on travel in Europe, many amateur dramatic societies have approached the British Council for advice and assistance (other than financial) to enable them to perform abroad. In many cases exchanges between British societies and societies on the Continent have been envisaged, and two have already been arranged.

The British Council, which appreciates the great cultural importance of such visits and exchanges, has come to the conclusion, on the advice of its Drama Advisory Committee, that the most appropriate organisation to sponsor such activities is the British Drama League, which has agreed to accept this responsibility. All such visits will in future, therefore, be the concern of the British Drama League, which will have the benefit of the advice of the British Council's representatives abroad.

Fleet Street Players launch themselves with *Night Must Fall* at Toynbee Hall on 1st May.

Benn Levy's *The Devil*, an earlier work, was the choice of Anglo-Arts (Drama) Club at Cripplegate on 26th April.

Malvern have a drama festival on 10th May. This represents a "get together" by local amateur groups, seeking to revive the town's reputation for drama and aiming at a Little Theatre.

The Questors at Ealing give *The Playboy of The Western World* from 28th April to 6th May. Michael Kelly's new play, *Final Dividend*, will be given a run from 7th June.

First post-war Sectional Conference of NODA is at Tunbridge Wells on 17th-18th May. Headquarters will be at the Spa Hotel. All interested in amateur stage work may attend.

Portsmouth Little Theatre Society publish a little magazine reflecting the work of the group. On 21st-23rd April they performed *Uncle Harry*, by T. Job.

The Bushey Little Theatre Players presented *Give Me Yesterday* at Bushey Parish Hall on 3rd May. Mrs. Joan Marlow, Producer-Manager, tells us that this Company has been formed to promote interest in Dramatic Art in the district, and also to build, eventually, a Little Theatre for the use of amateurs in Bushey. We wish them all success.

Another recently formed company of skilled amateurs is The South West Theatre Group, who gave their first production—Keith Winter's *The Shining Hour*—on 2nd May at The St. Martin's School of Art, Charing Cross Road.

With reference to our notes about the Educational Puppetry Institute, which appeared in the March issue, we should like to add that the Institute will be pleased to deal with enquiries from anyone interested in puppetry; amateurs, schools and professionals alike. The Institute has an extensive library as well as a department where a very wide range of books on the subject is kept. Enquiries, with stamped envelope for reply should be sent to The Educational Puppetry Institute, 26 Albert Road, Withington, Manchester 20.



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